

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CRAIG

September 10, 2001

I'd like to thank Chairman Breaux and his staff for putting this hearing together. I agree that it is important to raise awareness about scams that hurt the most vulnerable members of our population.

Clearly, we must enforce the law, remove the threat of dangerous products from the market, and bring to justice criminals who prey on the frightened and hopeless. I look forward to hearing from the government witnesses about their efforts in this area.

At the same time, we should remain wary of calls for expansive regulations that may restrict an individual's freedom to make his or her own health decisions.

We are fortunate to live at a time when access to health information is not the monopoly of a few, but available to nearly everyone - on the Internet, on new television stations devoted to health issues, and through a myriad of credible publications. I encourage people, young and old, who are contemplating taking dietary supplements to educate themselves. Become informed consumers. Above all, talk with your physicians and pharmacists. Take charge of your health - don't wait for the government to take charge for you.

I am interested to hear what evidence is available that senior citizens are being disproportionately targeted by health-related scams. Absent such evidence, I reject the assumption that seniors require special protection because they are somehow less intelligent or less informed than the rest of us.

I'd like to thank each of the witnesses for being here today and for sharing their insights. I look forward to hearing your testimony.